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AUTHOR	Gupton, Sandra L.; And Others
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ABSTRACT

A description is given of collaboration between the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and the Lexington (North Carolina) school system for delivering an effective and relevant inservice program to teachers. The intent was, in part, to add to the scope of the university's graduate program by adding to it a dimension of in-depth analysis of actual problems that confront classroom teachers. The benefit to participating teachers was the opportunity to achieve a master's degree and also meet state-mandated certificate renewal requirements, through participation in courses at the school site with opportunities for problem solving and independent study under the direction of university staff members. Benefits to the university included easy access to opportunities for field-based research, support for its student teaching program, observation and demonstration sites for students and staff, ready input from classroom teachers and principals on the university's plan for its teacher education program, and a chance to improve the quality and credibility of its teacher education program. The phases of implementation of this program and selecting degree courses to be taught are described. (JD)

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A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT, INSERVICE EDUCATION, AND CERTIFICATE RENEWAL

by

Sandra L. Gupton, Ed.D.
Curriculum Coordinator
Lexington City Schools

Richard L. Thompson, Ed.D.
Superintendent
Lexington City Schools

George A. Antonelli, Ph.D.
University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff

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As the effects of the budget-slashing activities in Washington filter down to local and state governments, school systems are faced with some difficult decisions regarding what is frill and what is necessity. The Lexington City School System is committed to developing a well-rounded, comprehensive plan of staff development which would help to accomplish several objectives in order to improve ultimately the quality of education for our students. We have strived to develop a plan that would increase the relevance of the State-mandated certification renewal process to effectiveness in the classroom. In addition, we wanted to increase the percentage of teachers in our system who hold graduate certificates and to make our own certification activities more relevant to teachers' expressed needs.

Teaching certificates in North Carolina were originally renewed on the basis of successful teaching experience. After the initial renewal, a certificate could be kept in force through two years of successful teaching experience during the five-year period when the certificate was valid.[1]

Gradually, criteria for keeping a certificate in force were changed from two years of successful teaching to a more rigid standard of requiring educational personnel to renew certificates through one of several alternative methods, including the completion of college or university courses. In 1971, L. G. Guthrie challenged the authority of the State Board of Education by contending that these requirements constituted a violation of constitutional rights since teachers were required to earn credits and bear the expense of such credits while State Department of Public Instruction personnel were not required to do so.[2] Even though Guthrie's complaint was aimed at the regulation regarding teacher renewal and the authority of the State Board of Education to require such renewal, the Supreme Court established the Board's authority in all areas of certification.[3]

In 1975 the certificate renewal requirements were amended again. The thrust of the new guidelines was to allow local school boards and governing boards of private schools more flexibility in planning activities to meet the needs of local educational personnel.[4] These new guidelines are currently in effect in North Carolina.

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[1] James E. Hillman, "Information on Renewal of Certificates," (Raleigh: Department of Public Instruction, 1984). (Mimeographed)

[2] Guthrie V. Taylor, 279 N. C. 702 (1971).

[3] Ibid.

[4] "Certificate Renewal Requirements" (Raleigh: State Department of Public Instruction, Division of Teacher Education Standards and Certification, 1975), p. 1 (Mimeographed)

In general, these certificate renewal requirements tend to promote single, unrelated, ten-hour courses, workshops, and seminars which oftentimes have little if any continuity or relevance to improving the quality of education for students in the classroom. In addition, university or college courses and master's programs somehow remain segregated, at least in the perception of most teachers, from the day-to-day problems of the public school classroom. One of our system's goals for staff development was to find a better way of bridging the gap between theory and practice by working on the transition from university based learning to classroom implementation.

However, our budget, like all school budgets this year, had to bear the scrutiny of various factions which were interested in cutting those items that were not deemed essential. The position taken by our administrative staff and Board of Education was that good staff development is no longer a luxury, but essential to good teaching and learning. The need to improve teacher morale, a desire to promote from within, and the fact that tenured teachers were often reluctant to change positions and possibly wind up in a cut-back situation, contributed to our commitment to make opportunities for inservice education available. Moreover, many of our teachers had not pursued a graduate certificate because of family commitments or distance from a university campus.

With these thoughts in mind, we sought assistance from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro in hopes of developing a plan for staff development that was mutually beneficial to UNC-G and our school system. Realizing fully that other options such as clusters, field-based programs, and external degrees were available, we felt that the ideas of UNC-G and our school system were quite parallel. Our intent was not to jeopardize the integrity or credibility of their graduate program, but to add to it a dimension of in-depth analysis of actual problems that confront classroom teachers. We envisioned a portion of the required work for the graduate certificate being completed on our site with opportunities for problem solving and independent study under the direction of staff members at UNC-G. Although some of the more specialized needs of our teachers might be met through class participation on UNC-G's campus, our ultimate goal was to have a number of our teachers achieve a master's degree through participation in courses in the school system. In order to facilitate communication and cooperation, a graduate assistant from UNC-G was employed by our system to serve as a liaison. This arrangement provided a person in the school system on a regular basis to work with day-to-day problems and to keep communication channels open.

The University also benefits from this cooperative arrangement in a number of ways. In addition to enrolling new graduate students, the University has easy access to opportunities for field-based research, support for its student-teaching program, observation and demonstration sites for students and staff, ready input from classroom teachers and principals on the university's plans for its teacher education program, and in general a chance to improve the quality and credibility of its teacher education program. The willingness of both the school system and the UNC-G staff to be experimental in trying to develop a flexible program of staff development addressing a wide variety of needs contributed significantly to the relationship's success.

In an effort to shape the program to fit our system's needs, The Teacher Assessment Profile developed by Kenneth D. Moore and Patricia E. Henley, was administered to our teachers prior to the beginning of actual course work. The results were analyzed to determine the areas in which teachers needed and desired inservice programs. The survey to which ninety percent of the teachers replied showed the system-wide priorities for staff development to be the following in rank order:

1. Developing better reasoning skills in children
2. Developing effective habits of learning and studying
3. Developing creative thinking skills
4. Guiding children to set up and achieve realistic goals in terms of their needs
5. Motivating children to learn through a greater knowledge of children's needs
6. Guiding children to set up and achieve realistic goals in terms of their ability
7. Developing a positive self-concept in children
8. Developing techniques for parent involvement in the child's education at home
9. Motivating children to learn through a greater knowledge of children's interests
10. Guiding children in the formation of clear values

Our first course began in the fall of 1981 on our site and was entitled "Diagnosis of Learning Difficulties in the Elementary Classroom." The eighteen teachers enrolled in the on-site master's program are currently into their second course, "Human Development." The choice of courses to offer as well as the precise content and management of the courses were

based on the assessment results and the perceived strengths and needs of participants in the course.

Our total staff development plan has many facets other than course work that we think makes our approach more dynamic and effective than other approaches to staff development have been. The plan is divided into five phases, the first of which offers, at no cost to the participants, the State-mandated staff development program in primary reading and early childhood education. The second phase of the staff development plan deals with the ongoing professional growth of teachers and aides which pertain primarily to system-wide goals and objectives. These activities help keep our educators abreast of the most current pedagogical methods. These staff development activities which are mandated by the State or are requested of our teachers by the central office staff will be paid for by central office funds.

The third phase of our 1981-82 staff development plan focused on math inservice education related to the new textbook adoption which took place at the beginning of the 1981-82 school year. Two workdays prior to the opening of school were set aside for a workshop on methods, materials, and current trends in mathematics. Since our new curriculum guides in math were ready for distribution in the fall, one session was devoted to study and instruction on how the guides could be utilized by classroom teachers. Another session of general interest--"Problem Solving-An Approach to Teaching in All Subject Areas"--provided opportunities for teachers who are not engaged in the teaching of mathematics to gain renewal credit and grow professionally. In addition, we joined with two of our neighboring school systems to bring in a nationally recognized author and educator for a presentation on teacher effectiveness.

The fourth phase of our plan deals with providing monies using a rate of two dollars per pupil in order for principals and staff to make staff development decisions at their individual schools. Each principal in conjunction with his/her faculty develops a staff development plan and submits it to the superintendent for approval. This plan includes the school's intentions in regard to visitations to other systems, schools, and classrooms, as well as attendance at professional meetings and conferences pertaining to the school's overall plan for improving teacher performance.

The fifth phase of our plan focuses on teachers' career growth through advanced degrees. In order to try to provide all of our personnel with an

opportunity to enhance their professional growth and development, we are committed to providing one-half of their tuition costs at a state-supported school. If educators choose to go to an institution which is not a part of the University of North Carolina's system of higher education, then tuition is reimbursed at the rate of one-half the tuition cost at the State institution which has the highest charge. The following guidelines have been established for the inservice advanced degree program: (1) Participants must have their plans for pursuing an advanced degree approved by their principal; (2) The plans must be approved by the appropriate coordinator or supervisor; (3) The plans must be approved by the superintendent; (4) Reimbursement at the rate of one-half the tuition cost per course will be made at the time of proof of satisfactory completion of the courses which are taken; (5) If the system requests an individual teacher to train for a special purpose or assignment, that person is eligible for reimbursement; and (6) Plans submitted must enhance professional growth in a current assignment or area of certification.

This approach to staff development in the district was developed to provide opportunities at all levels to encompass the needs of those persons who simply want to maintain current certification status as well as the needs of those who desire to do further work and study in their specialty.

Historically, inservice education has not proved to have a significant impact on teachers' subsequent behavior in the classroom.[5] Criticism of inservice education efforts is generally aimed at either the irrelevancy or the fragmented nature of the efforts. In a major study of inservice education, it was reported that ". . . inservice programs have tended to be unsystematic, poorly focused, and largely ineffectual. There are many reasons for this poor showing, but perhaps the main ones are lack of adequate budgetary support for inservice efforts and lack of a comprehensive scheme for planning and implementing sensible inservice programs."[6] Our plan for staff development includes sufficient funding and a master plan which has the potential to be flexible enough to ensure relevancy for individual staff member's needs, yet not fragmented so much that system-wide objectives and long-range goals go unaddressed.

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[5] George A. Antonelli and Sally A. Kochendofer, "So You're Going to Present a Workshop: Some Guidelines." The Professional Educator (Fall, 1980) pp. 20-22

[6] Wayne Otto and Lawrence Erickson, Inservice Education (Neward, Delaware: International Reading Association, 1973) p. vii.

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